



**COME
TOGETHER,
CANADA.**

**Stronger connections,
better mental health.**



CONNECTION IN THE CLASSROOM

MENTAL HEALTH WEEK TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOLS – DISCUSSION GUIDE

Welcome, and thank you for helping students come together.

Connection is a key part of mental health, especially for young people. Schools and classrooms can be powerful spaces for building belonging, empathy, and support.

This discussion guide is here to help you strengthen meaningful, age-appropriate conversations with your students about connection — with themselves and with others. Through simple prompts and activities, you can help students reflect on their experiences, deepen/strengthen relationships, and feel less alone.

As part of **Come Together, Canada**, these moments of conversation can make a lasting impact.

FEELING SAFE TO SHARE

Promoting Safety in Conversations About Mental Health

Before beginning classroom discussions about mental health or connection, it is important to create a safe environment for students.

Students **should never be asked to disclose personal mental health experiences** in class.

Talking about mental health can make people feel vulnerable. Sharing personal experiences in a group setting may create stress or expose students to stigma or bullying.

Instead, discussions should focus on **ideas, scenarios, and general experiences**, not personal disclosures.

IF A STUDENT SHARES SOMETHING PERSONAL

If a student brings up their own mental health concerns during class, respond with care and redirect the conversation respectfully.

1. Stay calm and supportive

Use a calm voice and neutral expression.

Avoid reacting with shock or concern that may make the student uncomfortable.

2. Maintain privacy

Do not ask detailed questions in front of the class.

You might say:

- *“Thank you for sharing. Let’s talk more after class.”*
- *“That sounds important. We can connect privately later.”*

3. Affirm their feelings

Acknowledge what they said without continuing the discussion publicly.

Examples:

- *“That sounds really tough.”*
- *“I appreciate you sharing that.”*

4. Offer support, not solutions

You are not expected to solve the issue.

Instead, help connect the student with appropriate support such as:

- school counsellors
- social workers
- trusted school staff

5. Follow school protocols

If a student may be at risk of harming themselves or others, follow your school’s safety procedures immediately.

6. Follow up privately

After class, check in with the student and help them access support if needed.

Creating clear boundaries while showing care helps maintain a safe classroom environment.



DISCUSSION GUIDES

These discussion prompts help students think about belonging, friendship, and empathy.

Encourage students to:

- listen respectfully
- speak from their own perspective
- avoid naming or discussing specific classmates
- focus on kindness and solutions



Students should always feel free to pass if they do not want to answer a question.

Grades K–4

Empathy, Sharing, and Kindness

Activity Time: 20–30 minutes discussion

Opening Prompt

What's something about you that most people don't know. This could be something you do or play outside of school, a food you like, a hidden talent, or anything you want to share.

Follow-up Questions

- What are some of the things you like to do with your friends or family, or anyone else who is close to you in your life?
- How important do you think having those people is?
- How can you tell if someone else is having fun? If they are feeling sad? Happy?
- What can you do if you see someone being left out?
- What are some ways you could help a new student feel welcome?

SCENARIO DISCUSSION

Scenario 1

During a game, someone says:

“You're not good at this game. You can't play with us.”

Discussion questions:

- How might that make someone feel?
- What could someone say instead?
- What could another student do to help?

Scenario 2

A classmate is struggling with an assignment/activity and asks you for help.

Discussion questions:

- What would you do?
- How can helping someone else make a big difference?
- What are other ways we can help each other in class?

Grades 5–8

Social and Emotional Learning

Activity Time: 20–30 minutes discussion

Opening Prompt

When do you feel most connected or close to other people? Think of a time in your past when you have felt this way. (Examples: Working on projects together, during a soccer game, at my birthday party)

Follow-up Questions

- What is happening in those moments that makes you feel connected? Either what the other person is doing or something you're doing for yourself?
- Looking back on your answer, what's something you need from the people in your life to continue having good connections or closeness?
- Everyone feels lonely sometimes. What are some reasons someone might feel alone at school?
- How can you tell when someone wants to be part of a group but doesn't know how to join?
- What's something you can do to help someone else not feel lonely? Something like saying "good morning," or encouraging someone who looks left out to join a game at recess.
- What are some signs someone might be feeling left out? What can you do if you notice someone is not included?
- Have you ever made a friend in an unexpected place? What happened?
- Why do friendships sometimes change over time?

- How might someone feel if they see their friends hanging out without them?
- How can we create a class where everyone feels safe being themselves?
- Describe a time when someone helped you feel included.
- What kind of friend do you try to be?

SCENARIO DISCUSSIONS

Scenario 1

A group of friends has a group chat, but one person notices they were not added.

Discussion questions:

- How might someone feel in this situation?
- What could someone do if they feel left out?
- What could friends do to make sure people aren't left out?

Scenario 2

You want to try a new club or activity, but none of your friends are interested.

Discussion questions:

- Why can it feel risky to try something new alone?
- What are some benefits of trying new activities?



Grades 9–10

Identity exploration & growing independence

Activity Time: 20–30 minutes discussion

Opening Prompt

How can social media help people feel connected?

How can it sometimes make people feel more isolated?

Follow-up Questions

- How can someone tell if social media is affecting their mood? Or the mood of friends?
- What are signs a friend might be struggling online?
- What can people do to make online spaces more supportive?
- Why do you think it's important to have connection in the physical world and not only online?
- Friendships sometimes become more important than family as we age. Why do you think that happens? What are the ways relationships with parents or caregivers change during high school?
- How can you manage stress when you feel pulled in many directions (school, work, friends, family)?

- What are signs someone might be taking on too much?
- What are the signs of a supportive friendship?
- What are warning signs that a friendship might not be healthy? Why can it be hard to step back from a friendship that isn't working anymore?

SCENARIO DISCUSSIONS

Scenario 1

You notice your friend has stopped replying to messages and is skipping social plans.

Discussion questions:

What could be going on?

- What could a supportive friend do?
- What are some signs someone might be struggling but hiding it?

Scenario 2

A new student joins your class halfway through the year and doesn't know anyone.

Discussion questions:

- What usually makes it hard to break into an existing friend group?
- What could someone realistically do to make it easier? What are some benefits of trying new activities?

